



Paper, Pens, & Prose: Discovering Early Manuscripts

THE LATIN LEGACY

Language as a Cultural Marker



Grade 6

World History and Geography

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

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I. Introduction

The Gutenberg Bible, one of the treasures of the Huntington Collection, was printed almost a thousand years after the fall of Rome, yet it is printed in Latin, the language of that long-departed culture.

II. Objective

- ◆ Students will study the persistence of Latin in Medieval and early modern Europe as an introduction to how we can investigate cultures that have affected areas where they were once present.

III. History-Social Science Standards Addressed

- 6.7 Students analyze . . . Rome, in terms of:
- 8 the legacies of Roman . . . language. . .

IV. Background

Following the fall of Rome, the most stable element of European life was the Roman Catholic Church. It not only controlled religious life, it was the main source of education and social services for centuries. Latin, the language of the Church, continued to be a means of communication for the educated long after its demise as a daily language among the masses.

V. Materials Needed

- Class sets of pages of the Gutenberg Bible (**Document 1**) and “The Lord’s Prayer,” Matthew, Chapter 6, Verses 9-13, in Latin (**Document 2**) and the English version from the King James Bible (**Document 3**)
- Historical and contemporary atlases
- Almanacs

VI. Lesson Activities

1. Ask the students to interview immigrants in their families, school, or neighborhood about the degree to which the language of their homeland persists in the family. What was the language of the country they emigrated from? What percent of the time do they still speak it when they are at home here in the United States? What percent of the time do their children or grandchildren speak it in the home? In class, calculate averages for each category. Ask the students to list all the reasons that homeland languages tend to disappear in the U.S. today. If there is a greater persistence of Spanish than other languages in the second and third generation, why do they think that is so?
2. Pass out a copy of pages from the Gutenberg Bible pages (**Document 1**). Review the historical facts about the Bible—it was printed in Mainz, now Germany, in 1455. It uses a typeface similar to that used in the handwritten books that preceded it. The text of the Huntington’s copy was printed on vellum and decorated by hand; other copies were printed on paper. Point out that although the Gutenberg Bible was printed almost 1,000 years after the fall of Rome, it is in Latin. A millennium is an extraordinarily long time for a language that is no longer used in daily discourse to exist in more than a fragmentary fashion. Clearly, Latin had a special supporting structure—the Roman Catholic Church. Use the textbook to research the growth of Christianity in the Roman Empire and the spread of the Roman Catholic Church in Europe. Have the students use historical and contemporary atlases (or *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome*, Adkins and Adkins, Facts on File) to see if Mainz was part of the Roman Empire.

[It was the Roman town of Moguntiacum in Gaul.]
3. Although English is a Germanic language, Latin has influenced it. Have the students read the Lord’s Prayer in Latin (**Document 2**). Do they recognize any words? [Perhaps “nomen” for name or “tentationem” for temptation.] If you have speakers of Romance languages such as Spanish, French, or Italian in your room, do they recognize more words?

Now pass out the Lord’s Prayer in English (**Document 3**). Does that help them figure out more words? Have the students use dictionaries to look for

English equivalents of other Latin words in the prayer. This is a good lead-in to a lesson on Latin-based words or word parts in our language. [Kristine Kalsem's *Everyday Words from Classic Origins* (Perfection Learning, 1993) is a useful reference.] Have the students research Romance languages. Were the areas where those languages are spoken under Roman control?

4. Use almanacs to list the number of countries for which English is an official language. Some people refer to English as "the Latin of the modern world." Obviously, English was not supported in these countries as the language of the church so what allowed it to dominate? What else in the modern world would cause the spread of English?

[Trade with the U.S., the dissemination of our films and television shows, Internet in English. . . .]

Do the students think it will continue to dominate? Why or why not?

VII. Extension Activities

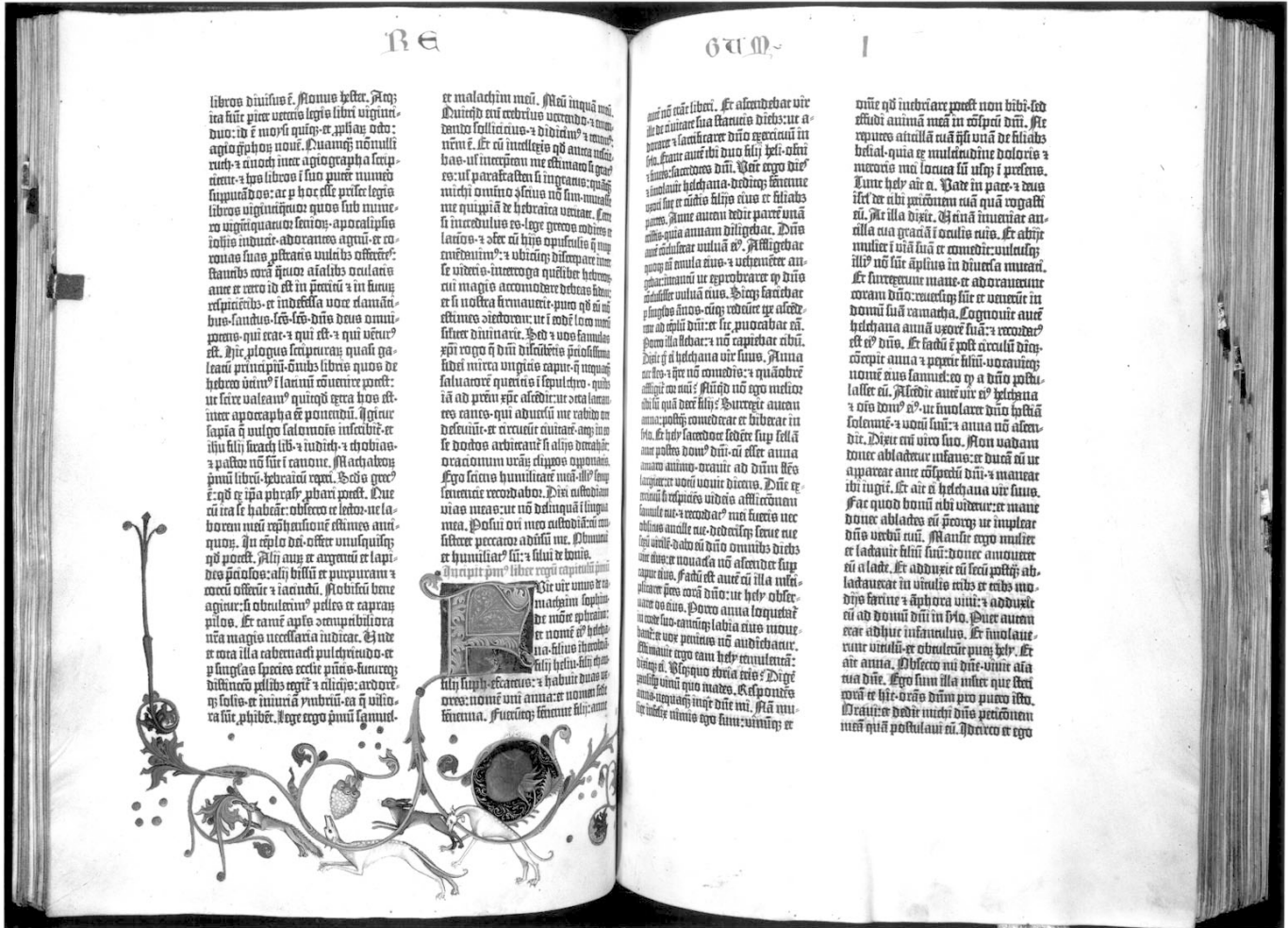
1. You may want to give the students a copy of the Lord's Prayer from a contemporary Bible such as *The Living Word* to compare to the King James version. Which do they prefer? Why?
2. Point out that Latin remained the language of only a small number of upper-class, educated people in many countries in the Middle Ages. Have the students interview a longtime member of the Catholic Church about attending services when the Mass was in Latin. Have the students consider how that person's experience might be similar to that of a European during the Medieval period.
3. Have the students use the index on a map of Los Angeles to find names from other cultures. [They may need assistance in identifying these.] Where are the streets with non-English names located. Is there a pattern? Why?

VIII. Vocabulary

<i>Romance languages</i>	languages that developed from Latin, the language of the Romans
<i>vellum</i>	writing material made from the skins of calves, goats, or sheep

Document 1

The Gutenberg Bible



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Document 2

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN LATIN

Pater noster, qui es in caelis:
Sanctificetur nomen tuum:
Advniat regnum tuum: Fiat
voluntas tua, sicut in caelo,
et in terra. Panem nostrum
quotidianum da nobis hodie:
Et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
sicut et nos dimittimus
debitoribus nostris. Et ne
nos inducas in tentationem.
Sed libera nos a malo.

Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1994). Courtesy of HarperCollins

Document 3

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN ENGLISH

King James Version
(ca. 1611)

Our father which art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name.

Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done,

on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Steven Pinker, *The Language Instinct* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1994). Courtesy of HarperCollins